

VERSUS STATE NEWSLETTER

November-December, 1979

Volume 2, Number 1

An Open Letter to Murray N. Rothbard Regarding His Political Opportunism and Ethical Agnosticism on the Question of Abolishing the State in the Context of the Libertarian Party.

Dear Dr. Rothbard:

Please excuse me for not replying sooner to your letter of May 12, 1979 but because of numerous difficulties and obstacles I had to surmount during the interim I have been unable to allocate the time or energy to make a reply warranted by the import of your statements.

You may have received some indication of our views through the Political Action Caucus literature widely distributed at the LP National Convention in September. We were disappointed with the RCLP's treatment of our proposed amendments and planks. As you may recall, we proposed positions on: the abolition of the State; self-defense against the State; deprohibition of fraud and an expanded youth-rights plank. After having had our abolition plank castigated as "counterrevolutionary" by RCLP founder and Central Committee member Justin Raimondo, I, in good conscience, must decline your invitation to join the Radical Caucus. I had seriously considered participating and I was prepared to influence other PAC members to follow suit.

The RCLP, in its unwillingness to discuss and support a position absolutely central to the future ideological course of the Party, is identical to the "opportunism" forewarned against in your letter of May 12. You said that this opportunism would be "signalized by (a) desire to hide basic disagreements rather than argue them out, and to solve them instead by bureaucratic maneuvering and capturing the machinery of the party." I understand from reports of persons attending the RCLP meeting at the convention that Justin Raimondo justified his "counterrevolutionary" attack as necessary to avoid a rift over the anarchy-minarchy question. By sacrificing the only possible logical expression of consistent individual liberty in the form of a concretely ideological idea of abolition, the RCLP has forsaken principle and "holding high" the only proper long-term goal of a radically laissez-faire party for the momentary gain of membership consensus. This is opportunism by any reasonable definition of the term.*

*I am presently writing an essay on "Left opportunism" in which you and the RCLP are examined. I hope to have it ready for publication for the December steering committee meeting of the American Abolitionist Movement.

Now, I will address myself to some of the other positions taken in your letter. Although I agree with you that we should accept political help from any person what ever the syllogistic or emotional process which brought him or her to a libertarian position; this does not mean we should sunder libertarian political-economic doctrine from its proper metaphysical, epistemological and ethical underpinnings. There is a demonstrable and significant relationship between mysticism, altruism, collectivism and the State. You cannot properly discuss, for example, a libertarian "class theory" without investigating and explaining the relationship of religion to the State, or of the altruist psychology to secular subservience. As you must be aware, ideas have a logical connection to each other because they relate the conditions of an integrated and ultimately non-contradictory universe. No political ideology -- especially one which seeks the radical and all-encompassing changes ours does (and must) -- can be presented out of the context of its philosophical matrix. You cannot afford to leave your ideology out of context without losing your ethical and epistemological validation. If you do, you will find yourself surrounded by persons who do not reason from basic premises -- ultimately destroying the remaining veneer of political libertarianism with ideological inconsistencies and "unresolvable" rifts of all kinds. This process has already started as shown in the RCLP.

You are quite right not to wish to correct all "error out of the world" but you are also a major ideological authority. You must provide an integrative capacity for less focussed personalities who can use guidance in the movement. To abdicate on the superiority of our ethical theory is to throw away our most powerful weapon for the eventual abolition of the State. There is no way we can ultimately defend our position without a coherent and integrated philosophy. This does not prevent us from agreeing to cooperate with Christian libertarians or anybody else who for any reason is willing to work for the abolition of the State (or its weakening and reduction at any particular stage). The masses need profound arguments with which to allay their uncertainties about their "need" of the State. There is no way to bring about the abolition of the State without a widespread understanding that the State, as a political entity, is merely one aspect of a whole set of mutually reinforcing authoritarian systems.

You must understand that our ideological problem is not one of manipulating socio-economic blocs and interests to achieve electoral power, but creating, as well, a new anti-authoritarian political psychology. That psychology will not be produced by dealing merely with superficial political institutions and policies. It requires the engineering of a revolutionary psychoepistemology in an important minority of the population. If you waffle on ethical theory at this point you undercut the future of our movement.

On a tactical scale, I don't insist that we castigate or re-educate everyone and his dog. I do think, however, that you should have explained carefully and unashamedly the natural rights thesis and the rational egoist ethic before the Philadelphia Society. Just as importantly, I certainly think it is necessary to oppose and correct the misguided altruistic defense of social welfarism of Virginia Black who propounds anti-egoist sentiments in

libertarian journals.* Especially in view of the fact that the same journal would not permit a discussion of revolutionary anarcho-capitalism.

As you know, the ultimate ethical defense of the welfare state (and the interventionist warfare state as well) is altruism. An overwhelming majority of the people in this statist social order who otherwise resent the coercion, waste and duplicity of the State sincerely believe in the moral efficacy of the altruist ethic. Although it may not be a politically sound tactic to attack the altruist ethic in certain electoral contexts, it is absolutely necessary to correct it within the intellectual organs of the movement. If you don't, you will permit the flooding and the erosion of our base inside the movement and with it you will lose the support for dismantling the State. The same "efficiency experts for tyranny" syndrome will repeat itself in the libertarian movement. Why? Because the ultimate ethical argument for the State is the need of the weak to be protected from the "strong" through the redistribution of means for maintaining an equality of police power. That is the ultimate argument of the minimal statist (and the springboard for maximal statist). Once you permit it, the ballgame is all over. The philosophical connection between major premises is no less important in an ideological context. If anything, it is even more striking in the clarity of its political ramifications.

This brings me to our next area of disagreement on the desirability and workability of an anarchist-minarchist party which fails to develop an explicit abolitionist program. You misrepresent my position on working with the minarchists. I have nothing against coalitions and alliances with minimal statist and others as long as these: (1) do not in any significant way hinder the expression of the abolitionist goal; and (2) are not bought at the price of sacrificing a coherent anarcho-capitalist ideological program. Presently the Libertarian Party which you advocate does not meet either of these criteria. Unless it does, it cannot succeed as a vehicle for eventually dismantling the State. Minarchists, and other fellow travellers, should be welcome to work with us for the common goal, but only as long as our principles are explicitly in command. Anything less is not only a waste of time for us but a positive detriment to our cause.

As soon as the Libertarian Party registers any significant political success (which is not likely), it will be attacked as an "anarchist" party in spite of the fact it will not be so in actuality.** The dominant minarchist elements in the Party will shift away from anything which could be interpreted as "radical" and adopt a conservative line. You and your friends will be dumped unceremoniously. Even the radical, laissez-faire types who might have

*See Ms. Black's article "Neglected Strengths of Libertarianism: Libertarianism Is Not A Heartless Affair". Frontlines, May, 1979 p. 4. (I am drafting a response to this myself although I doubt "Frontlines" will publish it).

**In fact, this has already commenced with a steady barrage starting with Edith Efron, Ernest van den Haag and most recently by the minarchist Joseph Gentili in the October 27, 1979 issue of Human Events. The LP is accused of being a pro-communist "anarchist" party. All this without the ideologically saving grace of being an honestly abolitionist party!

supported a coherent anarcho-capitalist line in the beginning will abandon you at that point. Why? Because the opportunist tactics which led you to drop abolition for the momentary consensus will carry even more weight with the non-anarchists. They will reason from your example that: "a party which has some chance of reducing state power is better than none at all." Right? It will be your argument merely brought one more notch toward pragmatic consistency. Except this time it will be impossible to radicalize the Party.

I challenge your view that anarchists and minarchists are, in fact, working together in the LP. Isn't it true that the RCLP candidacies all lost at the LP Nat. Con.? You may believe that the Clark-Koch ticket signifies a big gain for the left-radical position and that may be sufficient for you at this time. I suspect that they have no authentic interest in anarcho-capitalism but are part of a complex maneuver to support the political fortunes of certain interests in the petroleum industry. Having read Clark's materials, I have no reason to view him as anything else than a conservative posing as a libertarian.

If the "radicals" have lost all effective representation in the national decision-making level of the Party at this early stage then what can you expect for the future? Does the "coalition" of which you speak include the prominent minimal statist who rushed letters to National Review ideologically disassociating themselves from you after the publication of an obvious attempt at character-assassination? If it does, its a pretty shakey "coalition" -- don't you think?

In objective terms, it appears to me that no "coalition" exists in controlling the all important policy-making process in the Party at this point since even your very dilute form of anarcho-capitalist "radicalism" is not tolerated. Indeed, your failure to imprint the Party with a consistent and far-reaching program right from the start (or at least at one of the more convenient points along the way) has left the door open for the total control of the Party not merely by "rightist opportunists" but outright conservatives. This is the fact now -- not some speculation on my part. There is no "coalition" except in your fantasies. In sum, your opportunism on abolition, and related questions, has resulted in a quiet disaster, not only in the Party, but your position as ideological spokesman. The symptoms are of the gravest sort.

Your unqualified assertion (as defense against conservative attacks against your integrity) that the Party is a limited-state party signals your demise as a radical spokesman of any kind. I quote here from your attack on YAF in the May-June, 1979 issue of Libertarian Forum. In defining "(W)hat are libertarians?" You say that "we (sic) believe in minimal government at home and abroad ... we want to confine the U.S. government to protecting its own citizens....".

This statement of what "we", i.e., "free market anarchists" et al. "believe" is a fraudulent and ridiculous misrepresentation. A consistent anarcho-capitalist does not "believe" anything. He knows that the State is incorrigibly evil in all of its facets and types. In fact, the "minimal state" may be more evil because under its relative efficiency, it could well permit the ruling statist class to obfuscate and impede the evolution of an

authentically and consistently voluntary society.

In no way do we support, or much less, "believe in" a "minimal government" of any kind. Even less, do we sanction a "government" as a means of "protecting" anyone from anyone else as this merely works to extend and perpetuate the false legitimacy of the State. Any talk of defending the frontiers or citizens of a State is rubbish which reinforces the conservative sanctification of the State. Such talk can only imply that there are valid functions for state power and its prerogative to tax, extort, conscript and wage violent intervention on a mass scale. We assert with compelling ethical and political economic arguments that the State has no right to exist at all! Under no circumstances does the statist ruling class have the "right" to use force in "protecting" anyone -- even itself -- as long as it dons the criminal mantle of State authority.

The State is always a "redistributionist" thief and has no legitimacy at all, at any time -- past, present and future. For a consistent anarcho-capitalist, the difference between "believing" in a minimal government and professing explicit support for the abolition of the State is the difference between opportunism and ideological integrity. Anarcho-capitalist principles require the total liquidation of the State as an institution. It also implies that the statist ruling class eventually must be brought to justice to make full restitution for their criminal aggression. To imply acceptance, much less to proclaim any minimalization of the State to some residual condition, is misleading in the most profound sense and blatantly counterrevolutionary.

Indeed, we recognize your published statements supporting a stateless society, and so on, but their meaning is more than cancelled by your partisan opportunism on minimal statism. How can you accuse YAF of being "mealy-mouthed" on moral issues when you yourself have abdicated on crucial questions in a political context where and when it really counted? The YAF organization has never paraded itself as a paragon of reason and logic -- its founding "Sharon Statement" merely propounds a set of desiderata for one sect of conservatism. They uphold God, Country, Flag, Free Enterprise and Good Manners. Why flagellate them anymore than the CPUSA or the US Labor Party? None of them make a fetish of consistency. The fact that you unqualifiedly advocate minimal statism as part of your attack on them is totally ridiculous. You're supposed to be the anarchist. Remember? Any smart-aleck YAFer could answer you with a simple assertion he and YAF too are "minimal statist" only not quite so minimal so as to permit it to survive in the "real world". "So", he could retort to your denunciations: "what's the big beef about Rothbard?"

What you have done, in effect, is to reduce the level of ideological confrontation from one of the basic premises to one of concrete particulars. When you proclaim the goal of minimal statism you are not only acknowledging your acquiescence but supporting an allusion to the utopian nature of your philosophy, i.e., to every YAFer it says "don't take me seriously about abolition -- you know I'm only kidding -- I know it's not possible in the real world of politics." In one move your opportunism leaves you no room in the ring except in the corner of pragmatic consideration. You've shadow-boxed

yourself into your antagonist's corner where he can pummel you at will. Any YAFer can rebut you by saying that he too wants less government but wants to effectively defend the American system against Soviet aggression. Thus, the argument descends from one of basic ethics and rights to one of armaments.

This is precisely where you are going to lose because the facts are mostly on their side. Whatever the original motivation for Soviet militarism and geopolitical expansion may or may not have been, its threat is imminently perceived by the majority of people in this country and the alarm is growing. If you fight on these grounds you will surely lose. The tragic part of this is that you don't have to box yourself in this way. The proper line to take is that abolition is all necessary to the efficient and effective defense of this country -- that government can't and won't properly defend a free society.

By engaging in opportunism you consign the authentic anti-statist movement to the appearance of sharing a basic position with conservatives. Your tactics have made us liable for their inconsistencies in the public eye. Since they are a definite political focus in the popular conception all conservatives have to say (in the likelihood we become a political challenge) is that there is no basic difference between our positions except on the part of leftwing extremists. They are already laying the groundwork for their claim.

This mistake on your part will leave us no room to grow -- to provide credible alternatives for a stateless society. This makes it increasingly difficult, thus, to trust the sincerity of your claim in your letter of May 12, that you "believe in the immediate abolition of the State and would push a button to that effect if such existed." Indeed, you may not have found the appropriate button to push but certainly you can push a pen the correct way.

These are, thus, the losses resulting from your opportunistic position on coalition politics. It has not only lost you all effective influence in the Party but it increasingly constrains you from speaking your mind as you hasten to reassure your erstwhile partners in the coalition of your willingness to misrepresent yourself. First you abdicated on the questions of moral theory before the Philadelphia Society in March. Now you find yourself as a mouthpiece for minimal statism.

In my letter to Frontlines in early May I asked:

If, as Dr. Rothbard asserts on our behalf, our philosophy 'does not pretend to be a complete moral theory' then how can it pretend to such Draconian political-economic demands? How can it inspire anyone to fight back? How are we to precisely distinguish defense from aggressive force without a consistent and potentially all-embracing ethical theory? With what ultimate arguments are we to defend the moral soundness of a non-statist society?

Your actions have since answered my questions. The abandonment of moral theory has been accompanied by the abandonment of a consistent and courageous ideology. Just as you chose to abdicate on atheism and rational

egoism -- the only authentic underpinnings for natural law -- you have waffled on abolitionism. Your position of moral agnosticism and ideological opportunism has no capacity to inspire anyone to fight back. It provides no epistemological or ethical armament with which to withstand the big lies of altruist-collectivist culture. Without atheism and rational egoism the individual is in no position to consciously reclaim the authority of his own judgement and, thus, gain the psychological bulwark from which to challenge the political-economic authority of the State. Without the explicit promise of abolition from what should be the revolutionary vanguard of the Party, he is also bereft of any concretely understandable political goal. Your position, once understood, constitutes a philosophical abdication of authority and a political surrender. In effect, it amounts to a betrayal of the oppressed masses of the world, not only of their necessary education, but of their revolutionary future as self-conscious class antagonists of the ruling class.

I admit that this is a harsh indictment but I think it fits what you are doing. It is not too late, however, to change your course. I empathize with you on the difficulties you face as an activist but that is the risk you take in entering these matters. If I have been wrong on the factual or conceptual basis of my criticisms please don't hesitate to correct me. Before ending this letter, I want you to know that I fully agree with your denunciation of the cowardly betrayal by those "libertarians" who wrote to National Review pleading to have themselves disassociated from you. If I have strongly criticized you, it is not because I don't consider you as a towering mountain of virtue as compared to that intellectual dungheap represented by the likes of E. van den Haag.

Vanquish the State,



Richard R. Slomon
Director, U.S. Political Action Caucus

ON THE BACK PAGE: The proposed amendment "Abolition of the State" presented before the 1979 Libertarian National Convention in Los Angeles.

ABOLITION OF THE STATE

Proposed Amendment

Whereas the coercive monopoly jurisdictional power inherent in all states is absolutely inimical and eternally contrary to the justifiable exercise of the sovereign right of the individual to his or her life and property, the Libertarian Party, which opposes all forms of initiatory force, including its use by any governing agency, has as its ultimate objective the complete abolition of the State.

In declaring its intent to abolish the State as the main institution of initiatory force, the Libertarian Party does not oppose any form of voluntary social cooperation and/or self-governance irrespective of its particular philosophical or religious orientation so long as it rests on the recognition of individual sovereignty, and thus, the free and explicit consent of every participant.

Arguments in Support:

The logical political progression of the libertarian movement must result in an explicitly abolitionary intent. Any other ideological trajectory can only lead away from a consistent implementation of its basic premises (objective epistemology, rational egoism and natural rights) into a form of rightist conservancy of a minimalist State or fragmentation into various "left" and "right" reforms. Our movement must be unified in its focus against the State - the central institution of modern slavery. Just as the abolitionist anti-slavery movement in the antebellum U.S. was uncompromising and irreconcilable in its demand for freeing black slaves so must we in our demand for an end to modern slavery.

Some may argue that abolition of the State is "implicit" throughout the LP Platform and that this is "enough". "After all," they argue, "why should we place our cards on the table?" First of all, the only prudent inference which can be drawn from our platform is that there are many things we don't like about the State - which appears to be a "weird" mixture of "liberal" and "conservative" positions. Indeed, the Party has been advertised widely as an alliance of minimal statist and anarchists - thus, its start is at best ambiguous on the retention of the State. So it is definitely not clearly inferential that the LP stands foursquare for the abolition of the State. If that is the purpose of the LP it could be said that it is misrepresenting itself to those who believe otherwise. The LP should, thus, be forthright one way or another.

Abolitionism or conservatism, that is the choice! If we permit the present state of affairs to continue this Party will rightfully be labeled conservative by the authentic freedom-fighters of the world. The LP will be seen as a tool of rightwing apologists for the American Superstate.

This proposed amendment to the LP Platform was originated by the Political Action Caucus, PO Box 30681, Seattle, Washington 98103.

LIBERTY MAY NOT BE ENOUGH

by

Richard R. Slomon

In a recent column* Murray Rothbard asserts that the quest for political "liberty" should be exclusive of other ethical considerations. He strongly suggests that to venture beyond this ideological Rubicon in advocacy of positive alternatives is to renew political coercion and to foster utopian fantasies. He sarcastically attacks Milton Mueller for his "tangled lucubrations"*** attempting insights on a future libertarian society. Dr. Rothbard holds these attempts in such contempt that he does not even bother to quote Mueller for us or give us the specific source of his remarks. Obviously, the good professor is beyond concern that we might want to judge for ourselves. It seems he feels that the mere assertion "liberty is enough" should be enough for us.

I emphasize this point because I suspect that Dr. Rothbard and others who share his view dare not examine the problem in any greater depth. To do so, after all, would implicitly undercut this position. Because to seriously argue the desirability of limiting a political ideology to barebones "liberty" is itself to require an ethical rationale. To argue such, means to resurrect the critical significance of ethical theory to: (a) Natural Rights theory and (b) a specific set of activities in dismantling coercive institutions. In order to do that, one must be prepared to elaborate the positive desirability of the ethical theory as a whole. Or else how is one to know what is "liberty" and for what it is good? Although liberty is philosophically sufficient as a condition of individual sovereignty, it empirically, i.e., ideologically presupposes the question of how liberty taken to its ultimate extreme fosters good in actual life.

Dr. Rothbard weaves his editorial remarks around a set of large blind spots in his "strategic vision"***. One of these is very obvious in his stated belief that a stateless society "would look pretty much like the present one". This is indeed a strangely myopic conclusion for a scholar who has studied so many facets of the "crippling incubus of the State." And yet it becomes an absolutely necessary intellectual rationalization in support of his ethical agnosticism and political pragmatism.**** Once examined, we are left with the

*"Is Liberty Enough?". Reason, Dec. 79, p. 58.

**Apparently Dr. Rothbard finds something unwholesome in lucubrating, i.e., the act of hard study and writing in a scholarly manner.

***A phrase he has employed not infrequently in his political writings.

****See my letter published in the June 1979 issue of Frontlines (page 7) and my open letter to Rothbard in the Versus State Newsletter in the November-December issue.

bewildering oxymoronic conclusion of a stateless society remaining "pretty much like" a society suffering the "crippling effects" of the State, or in a phrase, "anarchy as usual".

Only two centuries ago, the invention of a constitutional republic, and with it the partial securing of individual rights, permitted the rise of a material well-being beyond the wildest dreams of the American revolutionists. In our epoch the process of change is exponentially more rapid and infinitely more profound in its implications. The very idea of a stateless society is the greatest social change ever contemplated by humankind. The ramifications of the idea of absolute personal sovereignty are not only politically and economically momentous but psychologically awesome.

Indeed, there is truth in Dr. Rothbard's *reductio ad absurdum* that a free society will not result in "human nature transformed in some magical way". He is correct in the view that there is no political route to positive human change (aside from the abolition of the State). But even the achievement of "liberty" to the extent of merely abolishing the State will require and enable an authentic liberalization of attitudes on a mass scale. Just that will make it next to impossible to maintain many authoritarian ideas and habits commonly accepted today. The mentalities of millions of persons will change profoundly in adaptation to a new condition of life.

People and conditions won't be the same. Drastic changes at all levels of human interaction will occur. Contrary to Dr. Rothbard's belief it will not be business as usual. The abolition of the State here or somewhere else, will touch off a series of cataclysmic upheavals affecting every sector of life and ultimately the entire globe. Every successive advance will suffer violent counterreactions. This is the nature of a non-traditionalist, secularizing society in the process of radical change. Achieving uncompromised personal sovereignty will blast apart all existing social relations. Contrary to Rothbard's view, there will be no happy back-to-business-as-usual after abolition. There will be no utopia - Rothbardian or otherwise - only new opportunities for our struggle to permit justice as well as liberty.

Just as there is no need not fall prey to the lure of utopian fantasy (as did Fourier, Trotsky, et. al.) in conceiving the positive potential of a libertarian society; neither does the strong projection of a fully developed ethical culture need imply authoritarian means. What is wrong, for example, for libertarian intellectuals to recognize that mysticism (and, thus, most religion) requires faith over reason, thus, tends to increase the individual susceptibility to political authoritarianism? Indeed we should be clear in our stand that, although we are opposed to the convenient religious doctrine which upholds the secular authority of the State, we recognize and respect absolutely the rights of the individual to adopt any form of personal insanity - Christian, Islamic, Judaic, etc.* If atheism or agnosticism are more conducive to the evolution of a rational and non-authoritarian society then why should we not advance these conditions as desired ends for our movement?

*"Insanity" here is not employed metaphorically. There are ample grounds to regard most if not all "mystical experience" as a part of mass psychotic behavior.

Having said this, we must not shrink from ideologically delineating the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical roots of authoritarian culture. For example, how do we explain political "liberty" in the context of a theocratic tyranny such as that in Iran? If "libertarianism" as Dr. Rothbard asserts "cannot satisfy many people's hunger for an all-embracing creed" then something else will continue to do so. That is the psychopolitical reality of our times -- to evade it is to be non-objective, non-rational and to lose by default.

These questions go far beyond the restriction imposed by Dr. Rothbard's 'correct line' libertarianism which artificially limits itself to "politics". What Rothbard's approach fails to provide is a basic explanation and elaboration of the psycho-ethical problems involved in transitioning to a stateless society. If the problem we face in abolition of the State were merely one of demonstrating economic efficiencies then we could accept Rothbard's approach. The widespread acceptance of the superior efficiency of the market economy, however, has long ceased to be the major bone of contention. In our country, at least, the majority of persons intuitively acknowledge the superiority of "free enterprise" over government intervention. On this basis, were it the only essential point of resistance, we should have won long ago!

No, it is not the question of political economy which makes most victims of the State balk at the idea of a stateless society. Rather, it is the implicit need for a new ethical identity. People intuitively grasp that a free society is capitalist which in turn means morally unfettered egoism. Contrary to the simplistic economist assumptions of Dr. Rothbard, however, the psychological transition from accepting an altruist world view to an egoist personality is a far more difficult problem for many than a mere intellectual switchover. It entails reconstructing the personality from one dependent on vicariously achieved emotional gratification to one capable of an intrinsic emotional fulfillment resulting from an autonomous process of conscious ethical calculation. This requirement is not merely psychological but psycho-social as well -- compelling the individual to consider an eventual re-arrangement of all his relations -- many of which may not hold up to the mutual demands of rational egoist standards. This is psychologically more awesome for most persons than even the idea of dismantling the State.

People are aware of these problems -- perhaps not intellectually -- or in the terms I have employed, but they feel the threats and uncertainties with a great acuteness. They are (quite correctly) suspicious of easy one-shot solutions such as dismantling the State. Those layers of the population who are at all susceptible to even considering our views want to know how and for what (and for whom) things are going to work. A very special minority of dynamic activists want a developed model of the positive aspects of our moral identity. Their interest is not in liberty per se but the positive ethical reasons which necessitate the achievement of liberty. Unless there is a morally deep intrinsic satisfaction achievable in the libertarian ideology, we can never compete with the authoritarian systems which provide the means of intrinsic moral self-exaltation. This is the powerful motivational essence of revolutionary Communism, of fundamentalist Christianity and of Shi'ite Islam.

The problem, thus, is not merely a matter of whether to play chess or poker, or attend Fellini over Bergman films as Dr. Rothbard would suggest but

one which goes to the core of human identity. The question is how an atheist, rational-egoist anarchist can think and feel completely valid in living and dying (if necessary) for an ideal. That is the essential question, not only for the psychological integrity of our future culture, but for the ideology of our anti-statist movement now. As long as we don't understand that, our antagonists will always have the edge.

Motivation is both a positive as well as negative process. It is not merely the "negative" desire to escape tyranny but the positive attraction towards understandably realizable improvements which have meaning to both the materialistically concerned masses and to the ethically progressive revolutionist personality. Contrary to the assumptions of many libertarians including Dr. Rothbard, most people at this stage really don't want to escape tyranny. This is not merely for the commonly assumed extrinsic material considerations, e.g., job security, medical care, retirement benefits, etc. It also proceeds from the intrinsic protection afforded the ego from the challenges of personal competition by a statist order. Libertarians often forget that totalitarian societies afford a comforting sense of immunity from accountability and objective standards for anyone who has gained even the slightest status. This ego-protecting cocoon forms the motivational basis for the conservative resistance to libertarian change we observe in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe.* Indeed, the fear of repression also reinforces the acceptance of tyranny but the overall passivity of the population comes more or less of a basic satisfaction with conditions as they are, i.e., the "business as usual" mentality. The present thrust of the libertarian movement is almost entirely limited to the "negative" focus of tearing down institutions which now provide a bulwark of security for the millions who feel uneasy about the uncertainties of change and competition. And yet it is precisely to this inherently conservative bourgeois class which the Libertarian Party aims its electoral appeal. This exclusive approach not only shows little promise of gaining the support of the natural client classes of the State but its petty egoist appeal offends precisely those persons most necessary in fighting the State.

Much of the moral fervor which motivates left activists and fuels their ultimately reactive "revolutions" comes of a basically valid resentment at the mass victimization of the powerless. They regard the emphasis on reduced taxation, deregulation and other economist political measures as merely a cynical ploy to continue the exploited subservience of the powerless while further reducing any available institutional means for restitutional redistribution. To these ethically sensitized personalities, however misguided they may be, libertarian advocacy of absolute natural rights rings hollow in the lack of positive concerns.

In considering this, we should take careful note of the fact that not one of the Soviet dissidents -- even those living safely in exile -- advocates laissez-faire capitalism. The total lack of movement towards Natural Rights or anything approaching a libertarian system exists in spite of their intimate

*It is also observable here among our own "civil servant" class and parabureaucratic corporate management. Incidentally, it is also a condition found among most "higher education" professionals.

experience with a most brutal tyranny. Instead of liberty and reason they have without exception reluctantly retreated to either democratic socialism or authoritarian religionism or both. Indeed, they certainly have shown not the slightest interest in our negative focus on "liberty".*

What this means logically is that the motivational key lies not exclusively in the extrinsic efficiency arguments dwelling on political-economic liberty but in an appeal to a maximal ethical identity. The strategically crucial segment of popular support in any radical movement (and ours is indeed inherently radical) must come from those persons who yearn most for a self-identity of the highest abstract order. For this class of persons, liberty may not be enough. It is often, in fact, of minor consequence. The men and women who form the hardcore of the various revolutionary organizations avidly accept a military discipline as strict as found in the most rigidly authoritarian countries. Their lives are totally dedicated to the achievement of their ideals on a world-historical scale. They often have no significant desire for petty liberties or materially extrinsic rewards. Indeed, these persons can be dangerous to liberty -- especially when they man the other side. But the point is that they exist and more significantly for judging the efficacy of our ideological method -- they have moved the world in their direction. This has been so not so much a result of the intellectual virtuosity of their ideologies but rather due to the ethical intensity of their motivation. More specifically, revolutionary Communism has functioned as a motivational conduit for secular idealist personalities who might otherwise be energizing the anti-statist movement. This class of world-shakers is indeed a fearsome group but their abilities can be employed for good or evil. The choice is partially up to us.

Whatever the misgivings on this, libertarians must objectively deal with the psycho-political conditions of our movement. One of these may well be that those most motivated to fight most effectively for the ideal of liberty may have little use for it personally. This is not so much of a paradox when one fully considers that ultimate satisfaction in life is moral integration. Liberty, in this context, is merely freedom from external impositions on the expression and effectuation of moral integration. It is thus, the abstract ideal of liberty as a historical phenomenon which will attract those willing to give their all for the struggle and not merely the attraction of momentarily experiencing liberty. The latter is what motivates most of the present movement which, as a result, is weak and ineffectual. It expresses itself in endless books and articles which drone on beating the dead horses of taxation, inflation, regulation, etc. The libertarian movement has been repeating itself for years -- so much so that through a process of levelling its appeal to the lowest possible common denominator -- all difficult questions have been laid aside. As a result, many problems have never been brought to the fore. Established writers such as Dr. Rothbard have petulantly attacked any deviation from the proscribed limits of proper libertarian discourse.

*An excellent summary of these attitudes and their ethical rationales can be found in From Under the Rubble, edited by A. Solzhenitsyn.

REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE AMERICAN
ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT HELD IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON ON DECEMBER 30, 1979

Abolitionists from different parts of the country met to resolve the problems facing a nascent movement to end the State. Not surprisingly, there was important representation from newly-won converts working high in the L.P.'s hierarchy. Their names cannot be divulged for fear of their suffering reprisals from the now ideologically bankrupt and repressively authoritarian party apparatus. In any case, we now have a de facto abolitionist caucus within the L.P.

The Steering Committee was unanimous in its desire for a full abolitionist stance and generally agreed that the L.P. would not achieve this purpose in its present condition or in any reasonable future projection of its capacities. Interestingly enough, L.P. activists were the ones most convinced of the basic structural inefficacy of the Party.

Extremely fruitful discussions were held on the motivational failures of existing rational egoist philosophy. The present libertarian ideology fails to enable the necessary intrinsic emotional gratification which should come of experiencing the abstract good in achieving an objective, ethically-directed identity. The failure of libertarian philosophy to provide intrinsic satisfaction from being good for its own sake was determined as the crucial inferiority of existing secularist anti-statism in its struggle with revolutionary collectivists and theocrats. The inability of rational egoists to derive intrinsic satisfaction from ideological work without the promise of extrinsic rewards and other petty-egoist rationales vastly reduces the strength and moral impact of our movement. Thus, it was resolved that the formulation of this problem and its resolution in the recent work of Comrade Richard Slomon should occupy the committee's full capacities. Each member of the committee promised specific help in expediting the publication of Comrade Slomon's completed opus.

No date was set for a national plenary session of the AAM but discussion of the Namibian C.D.P. leader, Ben Pillay's call for an International Abolitionist Party was seen as necessitating continued correspondence and instruction. Comrade Pillay is presently investigating the legal questions of an above-ground abolitionism in his country. The Steering Committee chose not to engage a study of legal questions affecting the AAM at this time.